

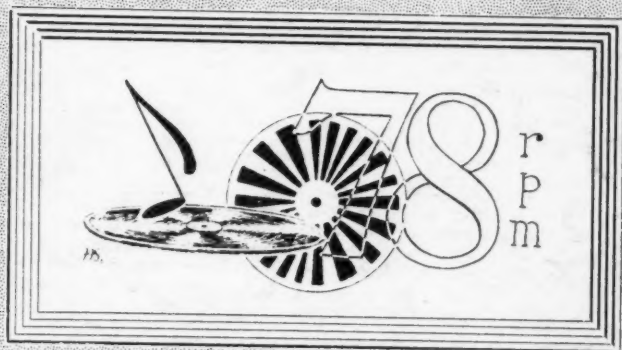
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November, 1944 • VOL. XI, No. 3

Edited by PETER HUGH REED

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THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

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The American RECORD GUIDE

November, 1944 • VOL. XI, No. 3.

Formerly The American Music Lover

Editorial Notes

Much news of musical activities among our fighting men has come to us in the past month. Some of this, we feel certain, will be of interest to our readers. We have received very favorable comment from several high ranking Army officers, and most of our articles from men in the service have been placed in the permanent record of the units to which the men belong. One officer has written us that these articles give "some idea of how carefully and comprehensively we have given thought and execution to constructive recreation and to the preservation and conservation among the soldiers of such of the finer aspects of life as they entered the service with. It is hoped, also, that we may initiate in others such things."

It would seem from information we have had that Corporal Philip L. Miller, who in times of peace was associated with us, took part recently in the amphibious landing at Guam. A short note from him told us about the landing, but did not of course, mention his location. In part he said that he had participated in an amphibious landing during which he lost his duffle bag with his personal property including all his music, letters from home, etc. The field organs used by the unit were damaged slightly in the landing, "but they still manage to wheeze out a tune or two." The record collections, presented to Cpl. Miller's outfit by the Armed Forces Master Records, Inc., also suffered some damage, but the better part of the collection arrived on the beaches intact. Cpl. Miller is an assistant to the Chaplain of his unit and together they are in charge of recreation for the boys. It would seem that the

interest in music mainly turns toward the popular field, but concerts are still given for those who wish to hear a Beethoven or Mozart symphony. Naturally, the boys like to make music, and in their spare time harmonicas, violins and any other instruments at hand are brought into play for impromptu concerts. Cpl. Miller did not mention the Glee Club he formed among the group when they were in Hawaii, but we can well believe that the boys still enjoy a good "sing" on occasion.

* * *

From the Netherlands East Indies, Sgt. Charles Jahant writes us an interesting note. "I have enjoyed *Some Aspects of Italian Recording*, although I would like to quibble with Pvt. Goldstein concerning some of his evaluations of singers. *Fifty Great Vocal Records* is, of course, a great game, and I hope it will go on indefinitely. We are a battalion, yet our situation with regard to V-discs is impossible. Thrown in with the welter of Spike Jones and the Andrews Sisters are no more than four or five discs that might be called 'classical,' and I'm including Toscanini's *Garibaldi Hymn* and *Stars and Stripes Forever*. Although we've been north of Australia for 15 months, these are all we've been able to draw. Two units of a relief organization have some new sets — Schnabel's *Fourth* and *Fifth Concertos* by Beethoven, Schubert's *Trio, Op. 99*, Rodzinski's *Scheherazade*, etc. — but they are apparently keeping them for something special; not only did both of them refuse to play any of the sets one night for a truckload of us who drove some 24 miles, but they spurned even an attempt on the

part of our Chaplain to borrow one set at a time. An Army Special Service outfit some miles away sponsors a fairly decent Sunday afternoon record concert. But Sunday is a work-day for us and we are frustrated again. So, we go on enjoying those G.I.s who write for publication from the Aleutians and other far spots that *their* last recorded concert featured the *Linz Symphony* and *Das Lied von der Erde*, and we keep on wondering how they do it. But — who knows? — we may find some of those Polydors and other recordings, of which Goldstein and others write, in Tokyo. I almost forgot: might we have some more aspects of Italian, or French, or German, or Soviet, recordings? These interest us just as the fine reviews of domestic recordings stimulate our appetites."

* * *

Pvt. Goldstein, who is located around Naples, writes of having conducted three concerts with the San Carlo Orchestra there during the early part of September. Pvt. Goldstein, who hails from Chicago, was well known in that city as a violinist. His experiences with Italian musicians are both interesting and amusing; he writes — "During rehearsals the orchestra jabbered worse than a bunch of women at a sewing circle. They seemed, anyway they should have been, tired from seven operas, two ballets, and one symphony concert a week, in addition to rehearsal periods and some extra out-of-town concerts and operas. The first 15 minutes of rehearsal were giving up to altering seating positions, demanded by the men. Then began the playing. The orchestra did not have a pianissimo in it; no shushing or beseeching would produce a true pianissimo. The shushing only brought echoes from some members of the orchestra. My next trouble began when they announced time-out for a smoke. They even told me when the

rehearsal was over. They tried this trick and that, but with persuasion and the help of the front office I got some results. My programs contained the Corelli *Suite* (familiar to record buyers), a Haydn symphony, the Mendelssohn *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, a concerto for harpsichord and orchestra by Paisiello, and some operatic arias sung by Capt. Spiro. The Corelli had never been played before in Naples; the parts and the score were distinctly at odds with each other and I had to rearrange the entire thing, including dynamics, bowing, etc. The parts of the Haydn were marked throughout with the most outlandish crescendos and diminuendos. All of these I had to erase. The Mendelssohn music, with the exception of the Scherzo, the orchestra had not played in ten years; the influence of Hitler and Mussolini. There was trouble in the *Nocturne*; the horns were not as good as Barbirolli had said they were or else they were weary. The Paisiello, played by Ruggero Gerlin, had been rehearsed in a hurry, but it went well enough; Gerlin was magnificent. The Haydn went best at the third concert, except for the Minuet, which was messed up in the Trio. All things considered the best playing was got in the last concert, despite the fact that the orchestra had had a rehearsal in the morning and over four hours of *Faust* that afternoon. There was quite a downpour in the afternoon which cooled the atmosphere and this helped. The Corelli was well played, there was a real sheen to the strings in the *Sarabande*, and the *Badinerie*, which I took at a stiff tempo, was played with real brilliance. Later, the Captain in charge of the Theatre San Carlo and the Colonel came back stage and complimented me on the string tone. Their enthusiasm and sincerity were very heartening. Other com-

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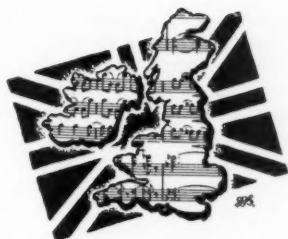
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The American Record Guide



SOME NOTES ON BAX AND WALTON

By W. R. Anderson

Our British colleague and friend, W. R. Anderson, whose writings on music appear monthly in the "Musical Times" and "The Gramophone", here presents the second of a series of essays he has promised to do for us on modern English composers.—Ed.



Arnold Bax was born in 1883; William Walton in 1902. The latter, then, had a big advantage, for British music was better supported in the new than in the old century. Another benefit was that Walton had more influential friends, better introductions to "circles." Bax had more academic connections, but did not move among "smart" people. Walton's biggest disadvantage was in starting his career in the "Twaddling Twenties," when the mid-European, Russia-Ballet influences were so harmful. Temperament, of course, makes the biggest differences of all. Walton shows an astonishing vigor, brilliance, angularity, with immense power, at times wild, even acrid; he uses very complex exciting, con-

trapuntal rhythms, where Bax proliferates melodically and harmonically. Both show some influence of Sibelius, Walton (as was natural) more than Bax. There is little self-revelation in words, by Walton, but Bax has written it, in *Farewell, My Youth*, a chronicle, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes slightly sub-acid, of only the first part of his life. Beyond a few remarks such as that he is "inordinately fond of Rossini," we have little from Walton about his philosophy, his fondnesses or feelings. Bax is the more obviously romantic composer. That quality comes more natural to him; Walton is the more tenaciously advanced; and, like all the still fairly young men, one aspect of his emotion, when he uses any (and his slow movements are important), derives from that Elgarian—or, if you like to argue so—that generalized pure-English spirit which I think we ought not to expect to export.

Some of the best of Walton's feeling-and-thinking lies in the slow movements of the *Sinfonia Concertante*, for piano and orchestra (1927), the symphony (1935)

and the terrific choral work *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931), the last, at the passage "By the waters of Babylon." This work shows the highest power of Walton's violence. It has been recorded in England. So have the symphony, a march, *Crown Imperial*, the "Twentified" but amusing skits *Façade*, the breezy after-Rowlandson overture *Portsmouth Point*, another overture, the Rossinian *Scapino*, recorded in America, and the recent violin concerto (1939). All these, except *Scapino*, are by H.M.V. *Scapino*, and some unimportant duets for children, are by Columbia, the viola concerto by Decca. There has been done lately a bit of his *First of the Few* film music.

Walton, then, worked through the Stravinsky-Hindemith-et-al influences pretty well, and came into a kingdom almost unrivalled. He has power, gusto, a language he has shaped himself. There are some parts of his angularity that may jar: but he is undoubtedly our outstanding middle-ageing composer.

Few Recordings

Bax has been very little recorded: the first discs of any symphony of his were released this year: the *Third* (of seven). A volume of Columbia's British Music series was devoted to his chamber music (*Nonett* and *Viola Sonata*, with a choral item, *Mater ora filium*, done once before, by H.M.V.) A song or two, and *Mediterranean*, with *Tintagel* (a Cornish impression), make up his recorded history: poor enough, for a man whose opus numbers are nearing 120. Bax, apart from his book, has said but few things about music: about himself, it is sufficient to hear that "I am an incurable romantic." The word, however much it may change its side-meanings, is always true for Bax: not always, I feel, for Walton. Again, one has to distinguish between the people who were largely formed before 1920, and those whose chief experiences came after; a gulf divides them. Walton's luxuriousness is very different from Bax's; his emotion is less easy, and seems shallower (but that may be because I, too, am. Baxianly romantic, not Waltonianly). Bax inherits more from the romantics who died glori-

ously in Elgar and Delius; and he avoids some of the conflict I feel in men like Walton. Not that he is a placid composer; he can raise as terrific a climax as any man alive; but always comfort quickly follows. Perhaps Walton has scarcely the sustaining force of a Sibelius, and Bax, apart from occasional movements, has not the will. (I do not hold up the Finn as necessarily an ideal: but, for good or ill, he is the richest modern influence, now that Stravinsky's, Schönberg's, and Hindemith's are, for any energizing purpose, dead. In my opinion they interpret nothing for us any more).

Bax Scoring Most Impressive

Bax's scoring is lovely, more impressive than Walton's; though the latter, in *Belshazzar*, has perhaps performed even more striking feats; but to my mind Bax is the ripest scorer living; and he certainly is the greatest achiever of exquisite codas. Bax's harshness seems to me more mature than Walton's, less wilfully acrid; but the hearer's temperament, perhaps more than his technical judgment, determines his enjoyment of the two. Bax's Irishism is natural, though he has not that nationality. Bax can be simpler; Walton's complexity seems to me less easy, less valid for beauty. The high tension in the latter sometimes strains my nerves; in Bax, it only stimulates. Walton's terrific thrusting power has in it an element of brashness, rawness, though not immaturity; Bax convinces more by persuasion, philosophy. That weak element in most British music to which I have referred in most of my articles here—the simple-mindedness which is apt to produce on foreigners an impression of forcible-feebleness—is partly, I think, native; possibly derived from our pastorality, our delight in simple humor—see *Punch*—our puritan background; in the art of the last quarter-century, obviously influenced by Russian and French japery; and, very much, by the Vaughan Williams school of folky-modality. I don't like it; but then, I happen to be not very English: more Scotch-Irish, and American, in my tastes. The English have been taught to take sim-

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ROME LEAVE

PVT. LEO GOLDSTEIN

PART 2

The saga of Ferruccio Tagliavini reads like a Horatio Alger story. His was a sudden rise to the position of leading tenor of the Italian operatic stage, for after his first public performance at Florence he was soon engaged to sing at La Scala and the Royal Opera at Rome. He is probably the highest paid tenor, not excluding Gigli, in Italy; this despite the fact that he made his operatic debut in 1939. His roles are restricted mainly to *leggiero* (light) and *lyrico* parts, which include among others the tenor roles in *L'Elisir d'amore*, *L'Amico Fritz*, *L'Arlesiana*, *La Bohème*, *La Tosca*, *Manon*, *Werther*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Rigoletto*, *Faust* and *Mme. Butterfly*. His singing, I am told, is especially beautiful in the first three operas named and in the two Massenet scores, which, of course, he sings in Italian. It will be recalled by readers of my previous articles that he and his wife, Pia Tassinari, have recorded the complete *L'Amico Fritz*, with Mascagni, the composer conducting (Ce ra). In Italy, they are regarded as ideal

interpreters of the parts of Fritz and Susel, and here the recording of the opera is considered one of the outstanding operatic recordings of all time, although *L'Amico Fritz*, of course, has never had the popularity outside of Italy that Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* has enjoyed. But let us consider the tenor's background and career to date.

Ferruccio Tagliavini was born in Reggio Emilia in 1913. As a boy, without benefit of teaching, he sang in various churches and school choirs. At the age of 12 he was nicknamed the "Piccolo Caruso." With the changing of his voice he gave up singing in amateur circles and cast about for a profession as a mechanic and electrician. He continued, however, to sing in churches, as he does even today. At the age of 20 he was called up for military duty and thereafter was in the army for four years. In 1936, he left the army on completion of his term of service and took up his business career where he had left off. In 1939 he entered the Concorso Nazionale Italiano at Florence and won the Bel Canto First Prize, which

gave him a free scholarship. He studied for the next seven months with Amadeo Bassi and then made his operatic debut at the age of 26 as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at the Teatro Comunale, with Adrianna Perris and Saturno Meletti in the cast, Mario Rossi conducting. This was a part of the Maggio Fiorentino, and Tagliavini's singing was an immediate success, and it was not long before he was engaged for La Scala and the Royal Opera. At both of these opera houses he had outstanding successes and since then he has sung continuously at all three noted operatic centers until recently, when he decided to stay in Rome and await the arrival of the Allied Armies rather than return North into Fascist-held territory.

Becomes A Cetra Artist

In the interim, Cetra, in the process of building up its artists and repertoire, signed Tagliavini as a recording artist. Appearances in movies and on the radio has helped to fill in his time between operatic performances and, of course, to establish his prestige with his countrymen. Italy is quick to acclaim a fine singer and the Italians recognize the qualities of a genuinely talented one and see to it that such an artist is given the fullest opportunities to exploit his gifts.

When I asked the tenor about his recordings, he said he did not like too well the ones made in 1940-41. His performances of the arias from *La Tosca* and of the complete *L'Amico Fritz* he contended were outstandingly representative of his work. Of the recording of the Mozart *Requiem*, he said there were too many forces present (one had the impression he was saying there were too many cooks) and he felt the recording was not evenly balanced. When I mentioned that I regarded the recording as a good one and the best performance I had heard of the work, he expressed his thanks and remarked that he was judging it solely from his own viewpoint.

I inquired if it was possible to hear some of his recordings that were unavailable at this time in the record shops, whereupon he gave me the name of an American soldier in the Marine Corps who, he said, was the recipient of a com-

plete collection of his recordings as a souvenir of their mutual esteem and friendship.

During the course of our conversation the baritone, Tito Gobbi, who was scheduled to sing Scarpia that night, poked his head through the door to say "hello." Tagliavini promptly asked him in to meet me and soon we were earnestly discussing the recordings that Gobbi had made. I have only been able to hear one of these: an excerpt from Verdi's *Don Carlos* which I own; it is excellent. Other recordings he has made were mentioned in the article I wrote about La Voce del Padrone.

A more recent group of recordings he made in Milan with the La Scala orchestra, including the *Prologo* from *I Pagliacci*, and some songs by Scarlatti and Donaudy, have been destroyed, according to word he recently received. He did not seem to regret it very much, for he said with a shrug of his shoulders: "After the war I shall re-record all of those and many more." Gobbi is a young man of 27 and has no worries about his future. He would be a credit to any opera house; in Italy he is regarded as next to Becchi, and being next to Becchi is no mean honor, even in Italy. Since it was growing late and the baritone had to prepare for the opera, he left us.

Italy's Leading Artists

Talk turned to other artists in Italy and before I knew it Tagliavini was giving me his impressions of the leading singers, conductors and orchestras in Italy. Here are his choices and remarks:

The four leading sopranos he named in the following order, merely indicating by a word what type of singing they are best suited for: Maria Caniglia (spinto), Pia Tassinari, (lyrica), Margherita Carosio (leggiera), Lina Pagliughi (coloratura). Toti del Monte, he says, has passed her prime and can no longer compare with any of those mentioned.

Among mezzo-sopranos, he named only two—Ebe Stignani and Fedora Barbieri. The first he said could sing all types of roles, the latter was best in lyric parts.

Among tenors he named four: Ferruccio Tagliavini (lyrico—no false modesty

here), Beniamino Gigli (lyrico spinto), Giacomo Lauri-Volpi (all classes), and Galliano Masini. He said that Masini was singing ever so much better than before.

Three baritones were named in quick succession — Gino Becchi, Carlo Tagliabue, and Tito Gobbi. Becchi brought forth raptures of praise from the tenor.

Tancredi Pasero, Giulio Neri, Luciano Neroni, and Italo Tajo were the four bass singers he named. The latter he contended was fine in *Elisir d'amore*, *Bobème* and *Faust*; his Mefistofele he regarded highly.

He said the two outstanding operatic conductors were Antonio Guarnieri and Gino Marinuzzi; the former he considers second only to Toscanini. Four other conductors of opera he admires greatly are Tullio Serafin (at the time of our interview in Florence), Giuseppe Del Campo, Gabriele Santini, and Franco Ghione. Among symphony conductors, he spoke highly of Victor de Sabata and Vittorio Gui, but especial praise was reserved for Franco Ferrara. The latter is only 34. "He was a fellow student in Florence with me in 1939," said the tenor. "He has worn himself thin with concentrated study. So immersed is he in music, he lives for nothing else. His recording of the overture to *La Forza del Destino* shows his tremendous sense of the dramatic. He is to be watched with avid interest."

The Best Orchestras

The best orchestras in Italy, said the tenor, are: EIAR Symphony (Turin), Fiorentina Maggio (Florence May Festival), La Scala, and Augusteo (Santa Cecilia Academy at Rome).

This survey of Italy's best musicians is a truly representative one from what I have been able to hear and ascertain. I would have a few changes to make but substantially the survey would be the same.

While we were talking, or rather the tenor was giving me his opinions, a free ticket came up for me from the box office; I could not resist the temptation, so after a short discussion with the manager about the company I made my way to the theatre just as the performance was beginning.

Around himself as leading tenor and

artistic director, Tagliavini had assembled such noted artists as the already mentioned Tito Gobbi, the tenor's wife Pia Tassinari and Italo Tajo.

The Quirino Theatre is rather a small one, having room for only about 1,000 listeners. It is built like most Italian houses — a main floor with boxes all around rising up six to seven tiers. The orchestra was of necessity small — only 43 players — but surprisingly good. The conductor, Riccardo Santarelli, knew his score well. The part of the Sacristan was well acted and portrayed although the comedy was on the jibbering type, but the conception of the role was so well integrated that I followed the characterization with interest. The Tosca, Adriana Guerrini, was in the traditional Italian mold: big as a hippo. However, she was young and possessed a not unpleasant voice which helped one to believe in the desire of Scarpia. Her singing was bright and clear but not always true to pitch.

Gobbi — The Real Star

In spite of the presence of Tagliavini, the real star was Tito Gobbi. His leashing impetuosity to find the escaped prisoner, his desire for Tosca, his courtliness and suavity on the one hand, and on the other his sneering diabolic anxiety to get down to the gist of matters at hand made his characterization a vital one. The use of his voice surprised me most; it was smoother and sweeter than on the one recording I knew. His undeviating devotion to the principles of good singing and his unerring adherence to pitch in the most exacting dramatic moments are not too often heard on the operatic stage, especially in Italy. Made up with a hooked nose, he did not resemble the handsome young man that I had met upstairs in Tagliavini's office. As a Scarpia, he was cruel, domineering, full of intrigue, a lustful man of the world glorying in the power that was his, impatient of anything that stood in his way until he achieved what he wanted. Such realism in the role is, of course, in keeping with the intentions of both Sardou (the dramatist) and Puccini.

Tagliavini in person was the same singer I had come to admire so much on records.

His voice was a bit more pure; his singing of *E lucean le stelle* and *O dolci mani* in the last act was especially fine. He has excellent stage presence and manner, and he went through his part with the ease and confidence of a veteran. His *Recondita armonia* was slightly marred by a cool tone and a cough, which might have been the result of too many cigarettes; he smoked five or six that I gave him during our two-hour interview. His responsibilities are great, however, and it may be that these are on his mind when he first comes on the stage. We are inclined to forget that singers are human beings and expect the best of them from their opening notes to their final ones.

All in all, the performance was an excellent presentation of *Tosca*, one that in the proper setting—a larger theatre and with a larger orchestra—might well have been sensational.

After the opera, I went back stage to pay homage and to say "goodbye." There I met the tenor's wife, Pia Tassinari. She was a most engaging personality, pert,

petite, with a gay sense of humor. I complimented her on her fine singing in the Mozart *Requiem*. She is now 40. When I reminded her of her singing in the Columbia *Falstaff* (as Mistress Ford), she waved it off with a gesture of her hand. That was done when she had just completed her academic work, she informed me, and was a most youthful adventure; she was 28 at the time. Since then she has made a few isolated recordings for La Voce del Padrone and then signed with Cetra to team up with her husband.

After saying goodbye to all and expressing my sincere hopes of meeting and hearing these sterling artists again, I went out into the cool air of the Roman night and made for the Appian Way, in the meantime giving my thumb a few warming-up exercises and clearing my throat for any emergencies should a vehicle pass "Going my Way." For my three-day leave in Rome was over. Needless to say I had many pleasant memories of those three days, memories of fine singers, musicians, conductors and orchestras.

BOOK REVIEW

THE UNASHAMED ACCOMPANIST.
by Gerald Moore. The Macmillan Co.
New York, 1944. 84 pp. Price \$1.50.

▲ Gerald Moore, of course, is England's top-ranking accompanist. He has played for an imposing number of the world's greatest artists, including such singers as Elena Gerhardt, Frieda Hempel, Maggie Teyte, Elisabeth Schumann, John McCormick, and Chaliapin, and such instrumentalists as Feuermann, Schuster, Sammons, and Suggia. He has toured the U.S.A. and Canada; for a number of years he made his home in Canada. But, save for occasional tours, Moore has for the past twenty years made London his headquarters. His value as an accompanist is testi-

fied to by the fact that he is under exclusive contract to the English H. M. V. Company.

No one familiar with Moore's accompanying work on records will deny that he is a rare par-ner; his extraordinary insight into his art has been irrefutably set forth in his work with Maggie Teyte. One does not always consider the part a good accompanist can play in the success of an artist; I feel certain that Maggie Teyte, among others, would give Moore full credit for his part in her song recordings.

Moore laments the fact that more students of the piano do not devote themselves to the art of accompaniment; he contends that too many, as he did himself

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A SURVEY OF CHAMBER MUSIC

By Peter Hugh Reed

Period III (continued)

Bach wrote three sonatas for flute and clavier accompaniment — in *B minor*, *A major*, and *E flat major*, and three for obligato clavier and flute (*sonate en trio*) — in *C major*, *E minor*, and *E major*. Although the last three are the most important, the *B minor Sonata* nonetheless owns a richness of ornamentation and a variety of mood which has endeared it to discerning music lovers. Since, as Parry says, these works do not exclusively show off the character of the flute, they can be advantageously performed by the violin. The amateur violinist will do well to look up these works, if he has not already done so; they will be found welcome additions to his repertoire.

There can be no question that the three sonatas for obligato clavier and flute (Nos. 4-6) are heard to best advantage with a cello or gamba reinforcing the bass line. And Musicraft's recording (set No. 16)—of the *E minor* and *E major*, played by René Le Roy (flute), Albert-Levéque (harpsichord), and Lucien Kirsch (cello)—is therefore the most desirable one of any of the flute sonatas despite the fact that recording is thin-toned. Le Roy's exquisitely liquid flute tone is mated to fine-

ly played ensemble, the whole exhibiting executive finesse and tasteful style. The *C major* is also well played, although without the reinforcing cello, by Georges Barrère (flute) and Yella Pessl (harpsichord) (Victor set 406). The beauty of Barrère's tone and the nuance of his line distinguish the performance, and Miss Pessl's playing is good and her bass so firm that one is not left with the feeling that the cello would have profitably served the ensemble.

The *B minor* has been recorded twice —by Georges Laurent (the superb flutist of the Boston Symphony) and Harry Cumpson (piano) (Columbia set No. 203) and by Barrère and Miss Pessl (Victor set 406). Laurent's flute does full justice to the beautiful melodies of Bach's opening *Andante* and the *Largo dolce*, but the piano playing of Mr. Cumpson is far too pedestrian for its own good. There is less cause to quarrel with the use of the piano, instead of the harpsichord, in this performance, for the first three sonatas (being for flute and accompanying clavier) fare better than the last three when the modern keyboard instrument is employed. In the same Columbia set Laurent and Cumpson performed the *E major*, mentioned above,

but here the ensemble effects planned by Bach are not fully realized, for the piano does not achieve the effects of two distinct vocal lines, and the flute predominates to the disadvantage of the whole. There is no recording extant of the *A major Sonata*, which is scarcely understandable considering its splendid qualities, but the *E major* is well played by Barrère and Pessl (Victor set 406). There is another recording of the latter made by René Le Roy and the English pianist Kathleen Long (National Gramophonic Society discs 135/36), which does not compare favorably with the former first as regards reproduction. Le Roy's performance is distinguished, but I prefer the harpsichord here to the piano.

The "Cello" Sonatas

The three so-called cello sonatas—originally composed for clavier and viola da gamba—are such fine works, whether heard on the cello or the gamba, that their neglect by cellists is just cause for complaint. It is true that the cello does not blend as well with the keyboard instrument as the gamba does, but these works remain—in my estimation—impressive however performed. It would be preferable, of course, for these sonatas to be played on the instruments of Bach's time, even though the gentle and mellow gamba, known as the knee fiddle in its day, because it was necessary to grasp it firmly between the knees to play it, does not have the broadly expression appeal of the cello. Some authorities contend that these works are best served by the cello, because of their emotional vitality. Performances of two of the sonatas on the viola by Emanuel Vardi—the *G major* and *D major* (on Royale discs—now withdrawn)—confirmed their aptness for the viola as well as the cello. It has been observed that the tone of the viola da gamba is more like that of the modern viola than that of the modern cello. Apparently this view is shared by some Englishmen, for we find these sonatas are available in England played by Watson Forbes (viola) and Denise Lassimone (piano) (English Decca discs K1041/43). One wonders if the ideal combination would not be a cello and a

harpsichord, or better still the modern viola and the harpsichord. (I have been given to understand that William Primrose and Yella Pessl contemplated recording these works—a venture I hope will be realized some day because this would seem to me the perfect set-up.)

Fortunately, these sonatas exist in performances for gamba and harpsichord, expressively done by Janos Scholz and Ernst Victor Wolff (Columbia sets X104, X-111, and X-147). The first, in *G major*, long highly regarded by cellists, is an arrangement by Bach himself of the sonata for two flutes and figured bass. In the present form, it is undeniably one of Bach's most persuasive chamber works, one in which the melodic writing is both gracious and poised. It comprises four movements, two slow and two fast. Long known and highly regarded by English chamber music enthusiasts is a recording of this work by John Barbirolli (cello) and Ethel Bartlett (piano) (National Gramophonic Society discs 133/34). This latter recording has been called a valued memento of Barbirolli's prowess on the cello. Vardi's performance of this work on the viola (Royale set 34) was mated to the piano accompaniment of Vivian Rivkin. Although one admires the technical security and warm quality of this violist, one feels that neither his nor Miss Rivkin's playing reveals searching insight into the music's character. Their tempwork, however, is admirable.

The second sonata, in *D major*, although a fine work in itself, is the least distinguished of the three: it is more difficult than the fluent *G major* and less compelling than the *G minor*. The four movements of this work—two slow and two fast—partake of the character of the sophisticated dance forms of the time, the third movement being a true sarabande. Vardi and Rivkin in some ways were more successful with this sonata than Scholz and Wolff; this was mainly due to the quality of the reproduction, for in the Scholz-Wolff version the gamba occasionally takes on the character of horn, which has prompted some people to feel that Scholz should have used his cello (he was the cellist of the original Roth Quartet).

There has long been a controversy about the correct way of holding the bow when playing the gamba, and Mr. Scholz is said not to conform to tradition. Be that as it may, in the recording of the *G major* and the *G minor*, his tone is better balanced with the keyboard instrument and is fuller and warmer than that attained by other gamba players.

The third Sonata, in *G minor*, remains my favorite; it is one of Bach's most impressive works of its kind. It is influenced by the concerto in style and design, and one wonders why Bach did not later rescore it. It is said to be one of the most difficult compositions among Bach's chamber music works. The fervor and power of the opening vivace are irrefutable; how compelling are the sweeping flow and assurance of this music. There is a religious solemnity to the Adagio, and the finale corresponds to the opening in its vigor. Scholz and Wolff play all three sonatas admirably, but their performance of the *G minor* is the most appreciable projection of their joint musicianship. Here, the unfaltering tonal sonority and rhythmic assurance of the performance gives evidence of genuinely comprehending musical alliance.

Three Trio Sonatas

Three trio sonatas are included in the Bach-Gesellschaft—*Sonata in C major*, for two violins and continuo; *Sonata in G major*, for flute, violin, and continuo; and *Sonata in G major*, for two flutes and continuo. There is also a Trio-Sonata in D minor, for two violins and continuo (discovered in 1929). Of the first three trios mentioned only the *G major*, which has the same continuo as the *G major Sonata* for violin and clavier mentioned above, is recorded. Perhaps the purist might wish to quarrel with the inclusion of the piano in the ensemble on Victor disc 13591, but the superb musicality of the three artists—Marcel Moyse (flute), Blanche Honegger (violin), and Louis Moyse (piano)—affords such genuine pleasure that one forgets the instrumentation. If the performance of this work by Blanquet (flute), Profitt (Violin), Ladshof (cello), and Alban (harpsichord), on

Treasury of Music disc T-1—which I have not heard—equals the splendidly styled one of the above group, I, for one, would be surprised. The use of the cello to reinforce the harpsichord in this last is, of course, an admirable procedure. The *D minor Trio-Sonata* is also available on a Treasury of Music disc, No. 6, well played by a group including two violins, a viola da gamba and a harpsichord. Of the two works I prefer the *G major* with its more compelling inherent beauty.

The Musical Offering

The finest of Bach's Trio-sonatas is the one in C minor from *The Musical Offering*. It dates from the height of his maturity (1747). There is just cause for this trio being more widely known than the rest of *The Musical Offering*, for it is undeniably the easiest to comprehend and enjoy. The instruments are flute, violin, and continuo (harpsichord with or without cello or gamba reinforcement). The entire *Musical Offering* belongs in the chamber category (it was as a matter of fact Bach's last contribution to chamber music) with the possible exception of the opening *Ricercar a 3*, which is usually played as a solo. However, this opening piece fares better in my estimation when played by several instruments, such as three strings—a violin, viola and cello. It is also heard to advantage when performed by a brilliant organist.

Most of us know the story of the creation of this work; how old Bach visited Frederick the Great in his palace at Potsdam in 1747, improvising on an original theme which was given him by the King. After returning home, Bach wrote an enduring testimonial to the Monarch in what he called *Musicalisches Opfer* (*Musical Offering*). The work is in thirteen movements, most of which are canonic studies that own little subjective appeal for the average musical listener. There can be no question of a doubt that the work in its entirety illustrates Bach's supreme genius, but the fact that he chose to utilize the King's theme exclusively and accordingly resorted to a series of technical gymnastics has prevented the bulk of the work from finding a wide listener response. One

wishes that Bach had been less flattering to Frederick the Great, who means far less to most of us today than the musician Bach. Yet, though it will be admitted that the canonic movements, with the exception of one or two (especially the humorous *Crab Canon*, for two violins), have greater interest for the student of music than to the music lover, no one who admires Bach should fail to hear the work for it attests its composer's great imagination and resourcefulness. From the purely technical point of view the composition in its entirety like the *Art of the Fugue*, provides one of the most stimulating intellectual musical experiences a listener can have.

A Fine Recording

We are fortunate in having a fine recording of this work in its entirety (Victor set — 709) in the admirably effective and practical arrangement of Dr. Hans T. David published by G. Schirmer, Inc.). The recording was the direct result of a public performance prepared and presented by the Bach Circle of New York on January 30, 1940. It enlists such artists as Yella Pessl, harpsichord, the Stuyvesant String Quarter, Francis Blaisdell, flute, Albert Goltzer, English horn, and Robert Bloom, oboe. One wishes that the opening *Ricercar* had been played by a string trio, although Miss Pessl's performance of it on the harpsichord is praiseworthy. This opening *Ricercar* is, of course, a three-part fugue, brilliantly and forcefully conceived. It is definitely overshadowed by the finale, a *Ricercar a 6* (six-part fugue). The technical perfection of this latter has, as Mr. David points out, never been surpassed. But there is more than technical perfection in this composition; there is nobility, sentient beauty and an imposing dramatic intensity. It is one of Bach's loftiest and most profound instrumental works. The performance of this composition in the Victor set, utilizing oboe, bassoon, English horn, violin, cello, and harpsichord, is highly satisfying with its contrasting instrumentation, but, I greatly admire the performance of this piece by Edwin Fischer and his string orchestra (Victor disc 8660), and do not agree with those who contend

that this latter recording "has outlived its utility."

To return to the trio-sonata, which forms the middle section of the *Musical Offering*, and is the longest and most varied part of the work. David tells us that in order to please the King and his musicians, "Bach endeavored here to use comparatively modern stylistic patterns. Consequently this piece has become more widely known than any other part of the work. Actually the style of this trio is akin to the Italian *sonata da chiesa* of Bach's day, and the writing is more gracious and fluent than in the *Offering*. Despite the fugal characteristics of the two quick movements the aspect of the music is more lyric than dramatic. Indeed, the final Allegro owns gigue-like characteristics. In the performance of this trio in the Victor set, the harpsichord is reinforced by a cello. This, however, is not essential. The work can be played by three musicians, as Bach indicated—flute, violin and harpsichord or piano, or with a second violin taking the place of the flute. This unauthoritative recommendation of a second violin brings me to consideration of a modern arrangement of the trio for violin, cello, and piano by the Italian composer Alfredo Casella.

Bach a la Casella

Casella's arrangement showed up in 1935 on Victor discs 8710/8711 in a performance by the Italian Trio, comprising Alberto Poltronieri, violin, Arturo Bonucci, cello, and Mr. Casella, piano. The arrangement aroused considerable discussion pro and con in musical circles when first performed and again when the recording was issued. Casella shifted the parts, giving the original flute part to the violin and the original violin part to the cello. In so doing, he found it necessary to change the instrumentation considerably especially in the original violin part, often placing it an octave lower than Bach wrote it. The performance of this work is admirable from the standpoint of musicianship (Casella himself is a brilliant pianist), but less admirable from the standpoint of instrumentation and tempo: the expressive opening Largo is quickened to

an andante, and the two fast movements are taken at a speed which in one case — the final Allegro — tends to distort the thematic statements of the violin and cello so that they are often blurred. Despite these facts, there are those who contend that the Casella arrangement and performance are an effective and exciting exposition of the trio-sonata. For my own part, I find the Casella arrangement gives the music a ponderous character which seems wholly antithetical to Bach's intentions.

There is another recording of the Trio-Sonata (H. M. V. DB5125/26) played by an admirable group who call themselves the Danish Quartet, although the ensemble varies in different selections. The four instruments employed in this recording are flute, violin, cello and harpsichord. (This set, owing to the war, has never reach me.) It should be noticed that four sides are employed here against five in the Victor recording, which leads me to believe the tempi might be on the fast side as in the Casella version.

Few chamber music enthusiasts will wish to pass up this trio, or the *Ricercar a 6*. These pieces represent the supremely satisfying mastery of Bach in the chamber music sphere, and the Victor recording is a worthy projection of the music.

The Art of the Fugue

The Art of the Fugue engages our attention next, largely because a practical string quartet arrangement of it has been made in modern times by the American composer Roy Harris and Mrs. M. D. Herter Norton, which has been recorded by the Roth Quartet (Columbia set 206). This monumental work was another direct result of Bach's visit to Frederick the Great. The interest aroused by Bach's visit to the King and the resulting *Musical Offering* stimulated him to undertake the composition of a work that would exploit the principles of fugal art in the most extensive manner. From 1747 to his death in 1750, he worked upon this amazing creation, a compilation of fugues and canons based on a more malleable theme than he had obtained from the King, but nevertheless somewhat akin to it.

Since Bach failed to indicate any instrumentation for this work and because of its highly technical character it remained little known until modern times. The sad fact is that up to 1756 only thirty copies were sold of the edition brought out in 1752 by Philipp Emanuel Bach, and Philipp Emanuel became so disheartened that he sold the copper engraving plates for old metal. All this despite the fact that Mattheson, the leading critic of Bach's time, wrote of this work (as Schweitzer tells us) that it was a "practical and splendid" one, which "will astonish all the Italian and French fugue-writers, provided they can understand it—I will not say, be able to play it. How would it be then if every German and every foreigner should venture his *louis d'ors* on this treasure? Germany is and remains, without doubt, the true land of organ music and fugue."

Graeser's Arrangement

As late as 1909, *The Art of the Fugue* was called "not fit to be played as practical music" (Parry). Herbert F. Peyser, the American critic, contends that it was not until Wolfgang Graeser, "a young German who died a suicide at 22, made an orchestral arrangement of the work during the 1920s that it began to attract attention and to obtain performances which, in Germany, were so ardently patronized for a time that special 'Art of the Fugue' expresses had to be run from Berlin to Leipzig!" A recording of this work by Hermann Diener and Members of his College of Music (Diener arrangement) (Electrola discs EH-1007/16), which I have never heard is available in Germany. E. Power Biggs has recorded it for Victor (sets 832/833) on the Baroque organ of the Germanic Museum at Harvard; this latter from the Graeser arrangement. Biggs' performance is straightforward, uncompromisingly so, and lacking in sufficient imagination to vary at least the level of dynamics.

The Harris-Norton arrangement of this work seems to me preferable to any others I have heard, including the Graeser version (another orchestral version by Siedry heard in recent years was too Wagnerian

for its own good). There is a sufficient variety of tonal coloring as well as a smooth homogeneity of parts in the Harris-Norton arrangement for four strings, which allows for a felicitous and effective play of imagination on the part of the performers. The old Roth ensemble (which recently have reassembled), coached by Hr. Harris and Mrs. Norton, gives one of the finest performances that it has accomplished on records, a performance which can be criticized only for an occasional lack of sustained vitality. This may well be due to the recording, in which there is plenty of evidence of a greater amount of monitoring on the part of the recording engineer than would have been deemed advisable had it been accomplished at later date.

A Pertinent Foreword

In the preface to the Schirmer publication of the Harris-Norton arrangement, the editors tell us that "transcription for the quartet has a practical advantage over transcription for an orchestra. . . . But more fundamental than such practical considerations are the needs of the music itself. Intrinsically, the string quartet seems to us the best suited among all modern instrumental combinations to convey the nature of the work. . . . The quartet enables us to penetrate more subtly the peculiarly appealing beauty of the music, only heightening by its consistent tonal quality the sense of growth from the first fugue to the last." This is not merely an argument in defense of the string quartet arrangement, but sound logic based on a penetrating and comprehending study of Bach's original score. Had Bach lived to know the modern string quartet, I, for one, feel he would have regarded the four strings as the ideal medium for his *Art of the Fugue*; I do not think, despite the fact that he was an organist, that he would have preferred that instrument.

There are fourteen fugues in this work, the last of which was left uncompleted by Bach. In the Harris-Norton arrangement the music stops where Bach left off. It has been argued that the work should be completed, but any later-day completion of the score would tend to create unpleasant criticisms which I feel were

wisely avoided by the arrangers. The magnificent strength and dramatic intensity of this music, the amazing fluency and spontaneity of Bach's genius cannot fail to impress the attentive listener. Yet, it should be noted, only the heartiest soul can possibly listen to this work in its entirety in repeated performances. Even the Roth Quartet, I am given to understand, did not make the recording at a single session, although they have played it in its entirety on occasion in the concert hall. One should become acquainted with the work in small doses to enjoy it fully. The four groups in which the Harris-Norton arrangement is laid out provide an ideal method of approach (a most helpful analytical comment is provided for the listener in the score); one of these groups played at a time provides the most acceptable and enjoyable procedure in a program of chamber music. The listener may even find it preferable to reduce the number of fugues to one or two at a time.

"A still and Serious World"

As Schweitzer says, this work grows on one after repeated hearings. "It introduces us to a still and serious world, deserted and rigid, without color, without light, without motion; it does not gladden, does not distract; yet we cannot break away from it." Listening to it from the string quartet performance recorded one is going to get a mixed reaction; one may agree with Schweitzer in part: it is a serious world, somewhat unyielding, but not devoid of color or light as heard from four strings. It does not gladden in the sense that purely kinetic music does, for this is primarily intellectual music, but Bach at his most austere was never completely devoid of a universal emotional feeling or of realizing melodic lines out of material which — like the main theme — fails to impress in itself. I agree with those who believe that elements of melody and a universal emotional feeling are present—"sometimes overpoweringly so." Despite Tovey's contention that the work belong to a keyboard instrument, since it lies quite well under the hands, I believe few listeners would accept the Biggs performance in preference to the Roth. The aristocracy of the string quartet, the

superbly unified purpose of four strings, justifies the Harris-Norton arrangement, and admits this work into the chamber music field. Amateurs will find these fugues difficult to perform, but some experiment with them will yield valuable knowledge and understanding of the form and its problems in production.

The advisability of arranging Bach's works for instrumentation other than he intended will always be argued about. As long as orchestral arrangements of organ and other works are admitted into the concert repertory, there seems scant reason for excluding mention of some of these arrangements for chamber ensemble. The purist may cry out against such things but the average modern listener remains untouched by such dissention. It is a healthy manifestation of our age that listeners in general take a purely objective view of such matters. If they like the original and find the arrangement less persuasive, they adhere to the former, and vice versa.

The Passacaglia

If Bach's great organ *Passacaglia* can be elaborated into an effective orchestral arrangement, there seems no reason why it should not be similarly transcribed for strings. Unfortunately, the string quartet arrangement made by Alfred Pochon, and recorded by the Stradivarius String Quartet, of which Pochon was the second violinist (Columbia set X-72), does not allow for sufficient variation of tonal gradations or for the fullest and most satisfying exploitation of the grandeur of Bach's drama and imaginative play. The contrapuntal structure of the work should lend itself to stringed treatment, but, as ingenious as Pochon's arrangement, is, one feels in the long run that he bit off more than his foursome could successfully chew. There are admirable qualities in the playing of this quartet, but not all the variations emerge with equal success, the greatness and loftiness of the music is not fittingly served in this case by the arrangement. The performance impressed me greatly on first hearing, but on returning to the orchestral and organ version I found it soon paled.

It might be of interest to amateurs to know that Mozart arranged for string quartet five fugues from the second book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. I have never heard these in performance but I rather suspect that they would prove as legitimate and as interesting (more so perhaps) as similar arrangements for the orchestra. Cobbett's lists quite a number of arrangements of Bach for chamber groups none of which are apparently played in public. An arrangement by E. Neumann, of the *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6*, for piano and three strings, might interest some amateur players.

The Leners Play Bach

The famous organ *Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major* has been arranged for orchestra and also, I am told, for string quartet, by Leo Weiner, the Hungarian composer. Some years ago the Lener Quartet made a recording of the *Adagio* only from the Weiner arrangement (English Columbia disc DB717 — reverse face: Sh. mann's *Traumerai*). The Bach side of this disc received some praise in England, but the recording did not appeal to me. Amateurs will probably be interested to know about this arrangement, although it may not be easy to obtain. However, amateur performers are often like record collectors; the more difficult a printed work is to get the greater the incentive. Whether the reward is commensurate or not does not seem to deter them.

In July 1942, the English musicians, Frederick Grinke (violin) and Watson Forbes (viola), supplied four Duets, attributed to J. S. Bach, on Decca disc K1072. I have been unable to trace these in the list of Bach's works, and I am of the opinion that they must be arrangements, a view shared by a reviewer in *The Gramophone*. There are published a number of duets for violin and viola after clavier duets and two-part inventions, the work of Ferdinand David—a Swiss-born violinist. It is assumed that the works recorded came from the latter arrangements. They are well played, but musically only mildly diverting.

(To be continued)

BAX AND WALTON

(Continued on page 52)

ple-mindedness in their stride (politically, you will have noticed, as well as artistically). It has good roots, from Chaucer to Dickens; but it is a very English quality, which does not transplant. Bax has little of it—perhaps his falling into an Irish sentiment (not sentimentality) so often is the most obvious trait; he also had a brief Russian-tinged period. Even in that third symphony (1930) there is a trace of it. Walton shows stronger veins of that. The two violin concertos (Bax's is not recorded yet) are interesting for comparison. Both composers were writing for fiddlers, but Bax brings off a smiling job where Walton produces a more strained, difficult, consciously "brilliant" affair.

Two great men, then, as we see them: but for heaven's sake don't ask me where they are "typically British." Not (above all) is an occasional piece like Walton's *Crown Imperial*!

BOOK REVIEW

(Continued on page 56)

in his youth, "imagine the accompanist as a sort of caddie who carries the violinist's fiddle"; they do not realize that the musical life of an accompanist can be important and interesting. "No composer writes an accompaniment as an after-thought, for it must be the basis of the whole musical structure," he says. Of course, he is speaking of the world's best song literature; there are, unfortunately a lot of songs that have poor accompaniments. Mr. Moore writes lucidly and wittily, and although one senses a strong love for his profession throughout the book, one does not feel he has been unduly sentimental. His claim that accompanying is an acquired art will not be universally agreed with. The old saying that a singer is born and not made can be just as aptly applied to an accompanist.

Moore covers a wide territory—he discusses partnership, preparation, practising, and rehearsing. He takes his reader from the studio to the concert platform; he



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BONDS AND STAMPS

discusses the importance of the role of the pianist in violin sonatas, in operatic arias, etc. There is sound advice and good logic in his summations. He has a chapter on bad habits in which he admonishes the singer to do what the composer wants and not to require his partner to do something else.

The author's final words should not be forgotten. He rightfully contends that the accompanist must be a good pianist with a "sensitive ear" and a "sensitive musical brain", and more than anything else he needs to have a "heart"—"that repository of all human feeling, that source of poetry, fire, and romance". If only Mr. Moore could pass that thought onto some of our modern composers, he would be doing us all a great favor.

—James Norwood

The American Record Guide



FIFTY GREAT VOCAL RECORDS

By Stephen Fasset

PART IX.

42. Enrico Caruso (1873-1921): *Carmen* — *Flower Song* (Bizet). Victor 85049. Recorded 1905.
43. Enrico Caruso: *Cavalleria Rusticana* — *Addio alla madre* (Mascagni). Victor 88458, 6008 or 15732. Recorded 1913.

The early history of this noted singer should be studied by all young tenors who strive to emulate the tremendous tones recorded by Caruso after he had attained vocal maturity. As a boy, he had a pleasing contralto voice and sang often in church services, continuing to do so even after his voice changed into a rather thin tenor. It was not then an impressive organ. In fact, it was considered exceptionally weak, the weakest in Maestro Vergine's class of aspiring vocalists. Yet Caruso was never allowed to force his tone and if anything his manner of singing was over-cautious, with the result that his high tones kept breaking in a most embarrassing way. All the same, there is no doubt that those few years of restraint protected Caruso from injuring

his voice. In the late '90s, the tenor came under the influence of Vincenzo Lombardi, who encouraged a more vigorous method, and by 1900 the tenor's top notes had finally become secure. The power and abandon of Caruso's mature singing were not a gift from God, as so many would like us to believe, but a result of many years of patient study.

Caruso made his debut in 1894 without impressing his audiences much one way or the other. Four years later, however, his career reached its turning point when he took part in the première of Giordano's *Fedora*. His marvelous lyric singing caused a real sensation and from then onward a great career was assured. In 1900, he sang at La Scala for the first time under the direction of Maestro Toscanini. In 1902, he made his first records for the Gramophone company and a hearing of one of them—*Pagliacci: Vesti la giubba* (H.M.V. DA546) — convinced Heinrich Conried that Caruso was the tenor he needed for his first season as producer at the Metropolitan Opera. On the night of November 3, 1903, Caruso made his Metropolitan début as the Duke

in *Rigoletto*. He was a success, but not an immediate sensation. The critics noted that he possessed a fine voice free from the blar that was typical of so many Italian tenors in those days. But there were rather unfavorable comparisons with the recently retired Jean de Reszke. As the season progressed, however, Caruso became more certain of himself and sang with increasing authority and fervor.

Conried admired Caruso tremendously and he seems to have felt that this new tenor had great possibilities as a dramatic singer. Some authorities believe that Conried's well-meant enthusiasm pushed Caruso into dramatic parts a little too fast for the tenor's good. At any rate, it cannot be denied that too frequent singing of heavy roles was responsible for the changes that took place altogether too rapidly in Caruso's voice. As the years went by, the voice became darker, heavier and texturally thicker, the high notes eventually suffering a corresponding loss of brilliance. A careful chronological study of his recordings leads one to the conclusion that it might have been better had the tenor remained longer a lyric singer, for as such he was unique. His vocal quality in the early period of his career had much more power, roundness and body than is usual with lyric tenors, and his style of singing was, in my estimation, a pure *bel canto*, distinguished by rare warmth and expressiveness. The tone already had unusual depth but the baritone quality of later years was only occasionally noticeable. It truly was an incomparable voice.

The discs Caruso made for the Victor company in 1905 represent him at the zenith of his natural development as a lyric singer. (The recordings of the following year show him how far he advanced toward the robusto style in the interim.) It is a pity that Victor's technique of recording Caruso was in one of its poorer phases at this time, for he never again sang with quite the same degree of lyricism. The reproductions are not as forward as those achieved before and again later and the degree of surface noise is high, but when played on the right type of equipment they are effective.

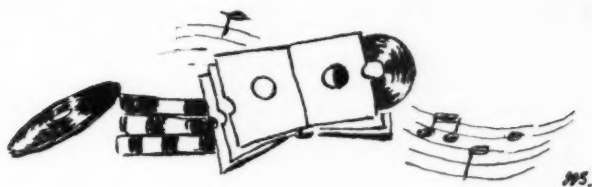
I have never heard more beautiful singing.

In spite of the fact that it is sung in Italian, Caruso's early version of the *Flower Song* remains the finest in my experience. It is definitely superior to the versions he made in 1909 (one in Italian and one in French), the interpretation being at the same time more carefully planned, more deeply felt and more sensitively phrased than those that came later. The same may be said of the following, which are all 1905 recordings with piano accompaniment: *Don Pasquale: Com'è gentile* (85048) and *Gioconda: Cielo e Mar* (85055), which are coupled on 6036, and *Huguenots: Bianca al par* (85056). To those who object to the bombast of Caruso's later style and who feel he was incapable of elegance, I particularly recommend these recordings. Another 1905 disc is also noteworthy, for it is a thrilling *tour de force* whose only blemish is a falsetto high B.—the *Brindisi* from *Cavalleria Rusticana* (81062 or 521). One of the 1904 recordings should also be recommended, for it is an example of pure legato singing that never fails to astonish those who know only the later Caruso. I refer to the 12-inch disc, with piano accompaniment, of the second verse of *Una furtiva lagrima* (*Elisir d'Amore*) on Victor 85021. Among Caruso recordings this is in a class by itself.

If, by concentrating more and more on heavy dramatic roles, Caruso lost some qualities, he certainly gained others. And he never lost the ability to sing melodiously, a quality that is rare in tenors of the robusto type. The *Addio alla madre* from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, a recording of 1913, is one of the greatest examples of lyric-dramatic singing that Caruso ever recorded. Vocally the performance is noted for that unrivalled tonal opulence and vibrancy that was Caruso's alone. It is projected with the torrential abandon that made Caruso the most thrilling singer of his time. As sheer sound it is stupendous (though always perfectly under control) but it is more than that, for the artist's genius for conveying the meaning of the text makes this a great interpretation as well.

(Continued on page 75)

The American Record Guide



RECORD NOTES AND

REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

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Orchestra

DELIUS (arr. Beecham). *Intermezzo* and *Serenade* from Incidental Music to Flecker's *Hassan*, and (arr. Fenby): *La Calinda* from *Koanga*; played by the Hallé Orchestra, direction Constant Lambert. Victor disc 11-8644, price \$1.00.

▲ The present record was issued in England in March 1942. Beecham has already recorded the *Hassan Serenade* (Vol. I—Delius Society) and *La Calinda* (Vol. III—Delius Society). Beecham's arrangement of the *Hassan* excerpts tends to refine the music somewhat. Flecker's *Hassan* was an

oriental fantasy which ran for a long time in London but which only survived eight performances in New York. I never could understand the American apathy to this poetic play; perhaps it was too refined and sensitive for New York audiences, or perhaps it came too soon after such obvious oriental extravaganzas as *Mecca* and the like. Delius' music matched the poetic text; it was refined, sensitive and somewhat nebulous (how often this last adjective can be applied to his music). The *Serenade* has long been disparaged by musical sophisticates, but I find it a true musical cameo, but then I still retain a mental picture of the play where it ideally fitted. *La Calinda* is a dance introduced into the opera *Koanga*; here Delius has aimed to capture the spirit of the Negroes, but curiously he had added a flavor of Grieg. Seldom does Delius seem as obvious as he is here, but that does not spoil the music, which has just the right spontaneity and go to make it an enjoyable moment. Lambert conducts these selections with a knowing hand, but the playing lacks some of the magic that Sir Thomas brings to Delius. Like my British colleague, W. R. Anderson, I feel that Lambert allows the faintest trace of the "jog-trot" to creep into *La Calinda*. Mr. Anderson's belief that no other conductor has quite evoked

the "mood" in Delius' music is not shared by me; I still think that the H.M.V. recordings of Delius made by the late Geoffrey Toye (several of which were formerly in the Victor catalogue) were among the best Delius recordings ever made. Toye's *Brigg Fair* has never been eclipsed, even by Sir Thomas. The clarity of the recording here lends considerable aid to the record's contents and the disc will undoubtedly please many who do not own the Delius sets. —P.H.R.

DVORAK: *In Nature's Realm—Overture* (3 sides); and SUK: *Folk Dance-Polka* from *Fairy Tale Suite, Opus 16, No. 2*; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction of Frederick Stock. Victor set DM-975, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Dvorak wrote three overtures intended to be performed as a group; these were musical expressions of the emotions awakened in him by certain aspects of the three creative forces of the Universe—Nature, Life and Love. The titles of the overtures are *In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival* and *Othello*. Despite some admirable quality to be found in the first and third overtures, it is the second that—with its impetuosity and gaiety—has caught and held the public attention. It was once suggested by the American critic, W. F. Apthorp, that Dvorak might well have chosen Schiller's lines, "All beings drink joy at the breath of Nature", as a motto for the present overture. The fullest essence of joy is depicted in this music, but it is not the kind of joy engendered by the composer's reaction to Life. Here there is an expression of serenity, naiveté and happy contentment in the contemplation of Nature. A note on this overture, in the program of the first performance of the three works in this country (under Dvorak's direction at Carnegie Hall, New York, October 21, 1892), read in part: "As a typical expression of his fondness for nature and of the blissful feelings which it stirs in him, the composer chose to present the emotions produced by a solitary walk through meadows and woods on a quiet summer afternoon, when the shadows grow long, till they lose them-

selves in the dusk. . ." Such a peaceful, untroubled scene as stirred the composer's creative urge would be hard to imagine in his native Bohemia these days — the whole thing seems to come out of another world, a world of kindliness, gentleness and simple sentiment. There are fleeting memories of Grieg here and of Smetana (*The Moldau*) but there is the unmistakable hand of Anton Dvorak, the talented Bohemian composer, who became a universally loved musician. There is no musical excitement but a quiet gladness in music; it is a pastoral scene delicately tinted, quite unlike the more vivid *Carnival* with its broad contrast of tone. Stock has given this music a knowing performance, which can be enjoyed even if one feels with the writer that it could have been bettered, particularly in regard to contrast. The encore by Dvorak's gifted son-in-law reveals melodic charm; this dance might be termed a gentler companion to Dvorak's Slavonic dances. The recordings here, like most of that obtained by Victor of the Chicago Orchestra, is tonally realistic and well balanced.

—P.H.R.

HANDEL (arr. Kindler): *Prelude and Fugue in D Minor* from *Concerto Grosso No. 5, Opus 3*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor disc 11-8621, price \$1.00.

The six concerti grossi that form Handel's *Opus 3* were mostly written in England around 1720 and were scored for flutes, oboes, bassoons and strings. These early concerti grossi are not heard as frequently today in the concert hall as the later series, *Opus 6*. Two of the earlier works, employing solo oboe, have appeared on records. What Kindler has done here is to arrange the *Prelude* and *Fugue* as a unit for full string orchestra. He calls for and obtains dynamic swellings and bigger effects than Handel conceived. There is no denying the effectiveness of the music, although neither of the excerpts is representative of Handel's best style in the concerto grosso form, and the return of the *Prelude* opening after the *Fugue* seems to me rather anti-climatic although it will

be admitted it gives a reason for playing the two parts as a single unit. The recording here is full-bodied and tonally alive, but some over-cutting occasioned trouble for my pick-up, especially at the end of the second part of the recording.

—P.H.R.

HANSON: *Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 21 (Nordic)*; played by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, direction of Howard Hanson. Victor set DM-973, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Howard Hanson is the recipient this year of the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished musical composition, for his fourth symphony. The *Nordic Symphony* was the composer's first essay in the form; it was written in his twenty-sixth year while studying at the American Academy at Rome. It is the work of a young man who is earnest and purposeful; some have found in its pages a spiritual kinship to Sibelius, just as others have marked the influence of Richard Strauss, Ravel and Vaughan Williams in other pages of his music. But influences in Hanson are so superficial that I see no reason for harping on them. Few modern composers have escaped the influence of the best of their predecessors. Like his *Romantic Symphony*, this early work of Hanson is vigorous and resolute. His scoring tends to be solid, full-voiced and rich in texture, but one feels at all times that he knows just what he wants and is going about getting it in a thoroughly workmanlike manner. The *Nordic Symphony* has been widely performed in this country and Europe. It is in four movements. The last movement which follows the third without pause, seems however less a movement than a coda. Hanson, of Scandinavian-American parentage, professes that his first movement "sings of the solemnity, austerity, and grandeur of the North." In the third movement, he uses an actual folk tune with considerable dramatic effect. The symphony follows the traditional classical pattern and is cyclical in construction, the first movement containing the material upon which the whole work is based. The 5-4 rhythm of the principal theme of the symphony

seems more studied than spontaneous; it gives way to common time later, where the rhythmic pattern flows more assuredly. Hanson has a flair for the dramatic, but quite often this is obtained more by dynamic effects than by the originality of his thought. The second movement, which is inscribed "To My Mother", seems to me the best one of the symphony; the principal theme, which he uses again effectively in the finale, is one of the best themes in the entire work. Moreover, the emotional quality in the slow movement is marked and its melancholy character is impressive. The third movement, which is inscribed "To my Father", aims to be fiery and rugged in spirit; it gives the impression, considering its dedication, that father may have been a somewhat melodramatic figure. The plaintive folk melody in minor, which the cellos first sing and which plays a considerable part in the dramatic character of the movement, is heavily scored in a manner that belies its dance-like pattern. The symphony is impressive in its solidity and technical resourcefulness. There is a sort of determination in this work, the seriousness of youth.

The recording matches all those of the Eastman-Rochester, being sonorous and tonally realistic.

—P.H.R.



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TCHAIKOVSKY: *Hamlet — Overture.*
Opus 67; played by the Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Constant Lambert. Columbia set X or MX-243, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ This is, as an English reviewer has said, a capital recording. Lambert is a sound musician, a conductor who shuns exaggeration and over-stressing of emotionalism. There is plenty of excitement and plenty of sentiment here, but they are provided by the composer and need no underlining from the conductor. Some contend that Tchaikovsky demands more indulgent treatment, but Beecham has shown us how well one (the *Fifth*) of the "pseudo-classical" symphonies (as Lambert termed them) of Tchaikovsky can be played and made to sound without indulgence in excessive *rubati* and exaggerated dramatic effects. And Maestro Toscanini, in his over-due performance of the *Pathétique* which I heard from records (not as yet issued), disapproved the theory that Tchaikovsky is a name that implies *rubato*. One recalls the shortened version of this overture, performed by Dorati on Victor disc 13760, a performance coarse-grained and sadly lacking in precision. As we stated previously, the curtailing of the score destroys its dramatic continuity. There is an organic unity in Tchaikovsky's tone-poems and fantasy-overtures which is considerably disturbed by abridgement.

This work is on the same high level as the composer's *Francesca da Rimini* even if one feels that the illustration of its subject is hardly convincing. Tchaikovsky created a Russian Hamlet, which is not at all startling when we think of it. As one reviewer has said: "How do we know how Russians see Shakespeare?" We hear it said that Tchaikovsky did a better job in *Roméo and Juliet*, but this only means that he achieved an impassioned sentiment in his love-music, which despite its Russian traits is universally appealing and in his characterization of the opposing houses of the two lovers he conveyed a dramatic strife and fury which are realistic. But this dramatic strife is not far removed from some passages in his symphonies, which are Russian to the

core. In his own way, the composer is dramatically effective here and one can accept this music for its own worth apart from the program.

Edwin Evans in his book on the composer rightly says that "Tchaikovsky's conception of the Danish Prince is not one that comes readily home to the English Shakespearean. Still, against the music not a word can be said. The form it is couched in is far better thought out than is usually the case when so elusive a subject is chosen." A musician friend of mine remarked recently that he regarded it strange that Constant Lambert, the author of the highly controversial *Music Ho!*, should be conducting Tchaikovsky. If my friend read Lambert's book carefully he will recall that Lambert said, "Whatever his limitations as a symphonist", Tchaikovsky "is undoubtedly one of the world's great melodists".

This set replaces the old complete version of the overture by Albert Coates, which as a recording is unquestionably dated.
—P.H.R.

Choral

WALTON: *Belsazzar's Feast:* performed by the Huddersfield Choir, Dennis Noble (baritone), the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, direction William Walton. Vic or set DM-974, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ English critics hailed this score at its first performance at the Leeds Festival in 1931 as the greatest English choral work since Elgar's *Gerontius*. *Belsazzar's Feast* belongs to so-called modern realistic school and one suspects it would have been a far different score had Stravinsky and Hindemith not pointed the way. But Walton is no mere imitator, but a strong individualist and here the forcefulness of his personality is fully exhibited. One understands why an Englishman can write that this work "consummates what can only be described as the 'coming-into-the-open' of British music", and in that sense alone the work "takes its place naturally in a great tradition". The great tradition

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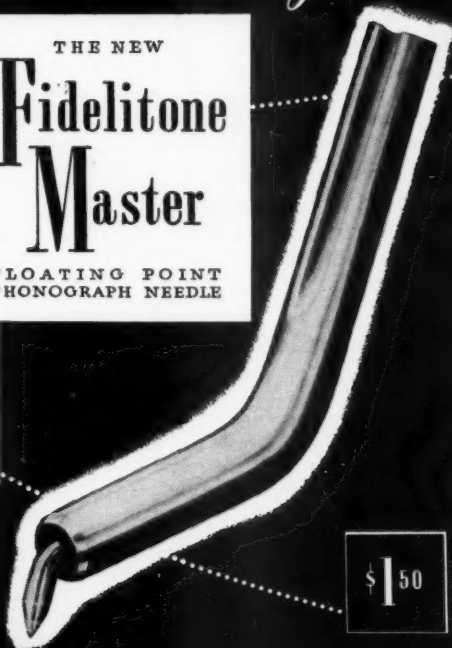
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is, of course, choral, for England has been for long years choral-minded. But Walton's conception of choral music here is a far-cry from Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*; Elgar was never so red-blooded nor did he play such havoc with the listener's blood pressure. As Ernest Newman has said, Walton "works consistently at a voltage that takes our breath away," and further that next to this score Stravinsky's *Symphony of the Psalms* is very anaemic stuff indeed." The sound and fury of the score place a tension on the listener's nerves, but at the same time the dramatic fervor and extraordinary vitality of the musical texture impress us with the composer's resourcefulness and fine control of his subject.

The performance here is a most impressive one, and that it packs a tremendous wallop is due to the extraordinary recording. Whether or not the English engineers have developed a technique of recording which has distinguished some of the Telefunken discs one cannot say. Whatever the origin of the method of recording, it is the most realistic and convincing demonstration of a perfect balance between a large chorus and an orchestra that has yet been issued on records. I thought that Victor did a splendid job in its recording of Hanson's *The Lament of Beowulf*, but the H.M.V. engineers have gone the Victor one better.

To return to the music and the work: the text is, of course, from the Bible; it was selected and arranged by Osbert Sitwell. Belshazzar's feast must have been a lavish, purple and gold affair, full of barbaric splendor, and Walton has given us the fullest impression of such an event. As Compton Mackenzie observed, "The effect is rather of an explosive sunset, and that, no doubt, was what the original feast resembled." The opening part of this score achieves a barbaric vehemence which one hardly expected would have come from an Englishman. The first part is so tremendous in its force and dramatic power that the later section pales somewhat in comparison, and with those who feel that the march on side 5 is anti-

climactic (W. R. Anderson, who writes of Walton elsewhere in this issue, marks this passage as revealing an English weakness). Of course, Walton aims to differentiate between the rejoicing of the heathens and the righteous, the alleluias of the latter having the second part of the proceedings, but to my way of thinking Walton's heart and head were more with the heathens than the righteous; the heathens stirred and quickened his pulses and inspired more excitement than the righteous. But even the righteous are a bit frenetic. Anderson, writing in *The Gramophone* of March 1943 when this set was issued in England, said: "Maybe it was like that in those times. They were a queer lot, those old Bible folk. The more one reads about them, the less human they seem." I hope I will not be considered a heretic if I plump for the heathens here, and I'm fairly certain that most listeners will agree that Walton himself largely did. This is a recording I think every record buyer ought to hear at least once, especially those who think that a choral work cannot be reproduced successfully by way of the phonograph. —P.H.R.

Chamber Music

SHOSTAKOWICH: *Sonata for Cello and Piano, Opus, 40*; played by Gregor Piatigorsky and Valentin Pavlovsky. Columbia set M or MM-551, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ The chief asset of this set is the recording. Since the composer has given the piano as forceful a personality as the cello, it is fitting that they should be equally exploited. And this Columbia has achieved in what seems to me a most remarkable manner. Save for an occasional rattle in my pickup, which may disappear after repeated playings (it frequently does), the reproduction was gratifyingly realistic.

Shostakovich's treatment of the keyboard instrument is hardly traditional; there is not the consistent balance between the two instruments that prevails in most well known sonatas. Those steep-

ed in the traditionalism of classicism may resent the composer's handling of an old form, but those who found his quintet and quartet acceptable will undoubtedly applaud this work. Stylistically, it is closer to the quintet often the two instruments seem to collide with each other rather than to blend. Although the cello is undoubtedly the main protagonist, the piano not infrequently claims the spotlight and leaves the cello acting as accompanist. The opening movement is mainly lyrical but it has conflicting dramatic moments. The main impression here is one of rambling thought. This and the slow movement are the longest, each taking two sides each to the others one each in the recording. The bristling scherzo (second movement) relegates the cello largely to the background; the piano here has the bulk of the tunes which are reminiscent of street songs. The Largo has a sustained melodic line for the cello; here we have the sort of neo-romanticism which the composer has exploited in his fifth and sixth symphonies. The final rondo is sheer banter, with the piano running away on its own on occasion. The work is characteristic of Shostakovich: side by side with thematic material of beauty and distinction are heard themes which are completely commonplace.

Both Piatigorsky and Pavlovsky would seem to do justice to their respective parts (I have not seen the score). Although the cellist merits our praise, it his accompanist which emerges in the most engaging light here, which may not be a healthy thought for the continued performance of this work in public by others artist.

—P. H. R.

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Keyboard

CHOPIN: *Impromptu in A flat, Opus 29*; and LISZT *Liebestraum No. 3*; played by Alexander Brailowsky (piano). Victor dics 11-8643, price \$1.00.

▲ Brailowsky recorded both these selections previously (all of a dozen years or more) on Polydor records. He accompanied the Chopin previously with the same composer's *Preludes Nos. 3 and 6* and *Etude No. 24*, thus offering a miniature Chopin recital. One wishes he had confined himself here to Chopin and saved the Liszt for another disc. The playing of the Chopin is admirably contrived here: the whole work flows from Brailowsky's nimble fingers with an admirable legato (the smoothness of the playing may deceive a lot of listeners into believing the work is easier to play than it actually is). He uses *rubato* tastefully and discreetly. That he does not attain much variety in mood-coloring is perhaps Chopin's fault rather than his. In the final

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four bars, Brailowsky allows his pedalling to carry over tone where Chopin has indicated rests; to me this is the only questionable point in an otherwise fine performance.

In Liszt's ubiquitous *Liebstraum* the pianist plays with admirable singing tone and encompasses the fireworks in the middle with an ease that belies the difficulty of the passage. The return to the melody is effectively managed in a shaded contrast, which the recording, we suspect, could have captured better than it did. The production of both compositions is tonally good, but there is some pickup chatter in evidence on abrupt chords, which is more disturbing in the Chopin than the Liszt. This sort of thing is to be found in most piano recording these days and one suspects that modern recording material has something to do with its occurrence particularly on high-fidelity equipment. —P. G.

Voice

CARPENTER: *The Sleep That Flits On Baby's Eyes*; and HAGEMAN: *Do Not Go, My Love*; sung by Rose Bampton (soprano) with Wilfred Pelletier at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1118, price 75c.

▲ Prior to World War I, the Indian poet and author Rabindranath Tagore was widely read and discussed. In his writings he showed a love of children, an appreciation of the beauty of the universe, a stylistic simplicity and a consciousness of God. It is said that he did much to interpret for the West the more serious aspects of Indian thought. It was only natural that Tagore's poems would be set to music by some of our composers, for all America was reading Tagore at one time. His poetic style, however, was so close to prose that it presented very definite problems for a composer. Carpenter, with the true sensibilities of a musical poet, set a group of Tagore's poems from *Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*); they have long held the esteem of leading singers. Back in 1934, Miss Bampton as a contralto

recorded *When I Bring You Color'd Toys* and *Light, My Light* (Victor disc 1628—withdrawn), both of which along with the present song are from the composer's song-cycle published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Miss Bampton sings here with freedom and ease, and with an appropriate delicacy. Other singers strive for more effects, particularly in Hageman's more obvious *Do Not Go, My Love* (which in my estimation is a far less enduring song than the Carpenter), but Miss Bampton sustains a mood throughout. The singer's diction is good but not outstanding. Mr. Pelletier provides her with satisfactory accompaniments but I have heard better ones. The recording is good. —P.G.

PAYEN: *Prayer for our Enemies*; a recitation in French recorded by Sarah Bernhardt about 1918 and now republished by the Collectors Record Shop, 825 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

▲ Sarah Bernhardt (1845-1923), the most famous French actress of her day, was especially noted for the thrilling quality of her voice and her records are eagerly sought after by collectors. The present example is a re-recording of a vertical-cut Aeolian-Vocalion (No. 22035) and, unlike the original, it can be played on any phonograph. (The B side contains an atrocious rendition of *La Marseillaise* by an unnamed brass band.)

Louis Payen's *Prière pour nos ennemis*, to give the poem its proper French title, is an impassioned and embittered plea to God for vengeance against the invaders of France. As an indictment it applies even more tellingly to the Nazis under Hitler than it did to the Kaiser's armies. ("They have revived a brutal way of living—of murder and pillaging and fire.")

Bernhardt puts her heart and soul into her reading of Payen's poem and when she comes to the concluding lines, "Fill Thou their cup of anguish to the brim... And never let a monstrous force rise again... Forgive them not—they know well what they do", she attains a pitch of ferocity that is overwhelming in its effect. The 73-year-old French woman must have been truly inspired to have achieved the climax heard on this rec-

ord. I know of no more effective voicing of the Prayer of our own time: Don't let it happen again! (A translation of the poem is given with the record). —S. F.

FIFTY VOCAL RECORDS

(Continued from page 66)

Caruso made more than 230 recordings and since it is reported that he himself felt that only a half-dozen or so were reasonably true reproductions of his voice (in this report, his preferences were unfortunately not mentioned), it is probably impossible to recommend individual performances without arousing controversy. Even in Caruso's own time there was one faction that preferred his early vocal style, another that insisted that he was at his best in the years 1906-11 and still a third that felt he was at his greatest during his last seasons at the Metropolitan. It was all a matter of taste, but of course there were countless thousands who always loved to hear Caruso sing, finding different qualities to admire in each phase of his career. Hence, in the Caruso recordings, which were made from about 1901 to 1920, there will be found something to appeal to all tastes. Fortunately most of his discs are not difficult to obtain and one is not compelled to accept my choices.

Certain other remarkable recordings of this tenor should be noted. I recommend the following: *Vesti la giubba* from *Pagliacci* (Victor 6001, 88061 or 7720); *Io non ho che una povera stanzetta* from *Leoncavallo's Bohème* (88335 or 6012); and *Manon—Ah, fuyez douce image* (88348 or 6020).

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 50)

ments on my work after the concert ran from the sublime to the ridiculous and back again. But this has been the way it has been for so many concerts given by outsiders. With only an hour and a half hours for rehearsals before each concert, the results were far better than I anticipated. Naturally, one feels one would like to have more rehearsal time, but these things are not so easily obtained. The members get

extra pay for extra rehearsals and they are always anxious to make it difficult for the conductor so he will demand extra time."

* * *

From somewhere in Southern France, Sgt. R. H. Plug-Felder, Jr., who in civilian life lives in Philadelphia, writes as follows about the French H.M.V. set of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*: "Your article in the October 1943 issue about the rumored complete recording of *Pelléas et Mélisande* interested me a great deal. Since arriving in France, I have been on the alert for any additional information I could uncover. Until yesterday (September 20), my search was seemingly a failure. Most of the dealers I contacted either knew nothing of the recording or said it had been released but they had never seen the set. After weeks of fruitless search, I was tempted to share your opinion that the recording might be another of those tantalizing rumors. It seemed as though I was pursuing a chimera, but I never gave up hope. Yesterday, when I entered a small record shop, the recording of *Pelléas* was furthest from my mind. I was in search of early French chamber music. The dealer,

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a quaint old gentleman, looked sadly at his depleted stock and said he had no such records. I noticed a stock of discs on a table behind the counter and asked what they were in my very poor French.

"Opera," he replied, "I do not think you would be interested."

"What opera?" I asked and I felt sure I must have shouted the words.

"Modern trash," he answered, and then in a quiet disdainful voice he added: "*Pelléas et Mélisande*."

"Only a seasoned record collector can understand the thrill I experienced. I asked to see the recordings, controlling as best I could a tremor in my voice. I did not want to show too much enthusiasm since I knew through sad experience that the price increases in direct proportion to the interest shown. The dealer placed the records before me and I touched them gently. The rumor was at last a fact—20 fine, shining new discs—the only complete recording of Debussy's opera. There was no phonograph in the shop but I bought the set regardless. The price was approximately the same as a similar set in the U. S. A. and I considered it a bargain. The only information I could elicit was that the set was released in May 1942 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the opera's première. The dealer knew nothing of the artists involved other than Germaine Cernay.

"My original intention was to pack the

records carefully and mail them to you for review, but, according to censorship regulations, the mailing of records by military personnel is forbidden. The only alternative is to carry them around with me and hope and pray they do not get broken. I do not claim to be a music critic and I know very little about opera in general, but I will do my best to give you some idea what the recording is like. I listened to it back at camp on a wheezy portable which had an erratic turntable and what I heard was a travesty on the sound engraved in the grooves. Keeping that in mind, these are my impressions: Mechanically the recording sounds very fine indeed with a good balance between vocalists and orchestra. Jacques Jansen (*Pelléas*) has a fine youthful voice, and, although I would not call it a great voice, it is supple and true. Joachim's *Mélisande* is delicate and youthful, but to my ears the best singing is done by Cernay as *Geneviève*. Her rich mezzo-soprano is ringing and clear. I can say nothing about the interpretation because I have never heard the opera and have no standard by which to make judgments. The performance of the chorus must also remain a mystery until I can hear the set on a better machine. It sounded muffled and veiled, but that was undoubtedly the fault of the machine.

"The cast is exactly as you published it in your article."

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, etc., required by the Acts of Congress of August 24, 1912, and March 3, 1933, of THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, published monthly at New York, N. Y. for Oct. 1, 1944. State of New York, County of Westchester: Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Peter Hugh Reed, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor and publisher of THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business managers are: Publisher: Peter Hugh Reed, 115 Reed Ave., Pelham 65, N. Y. Editor: Peter Hugh Reed, 115 Reed Ave., Pelham 65, N. Y. Managing Editor: Paul Girard, 115 Reed Ave., Pelham 65, N. Y. Business Manager: Walter C. Elly, in Service. — 2. That the owner is Peter Hugh Reed. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or

holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given, also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bonafide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. (Signature of Publisher.) Peter Hugh Reed.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 2nd day of October, 1944. [Seal]. James J. Marks.
(My commission expires March 30, 1946).

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